

Shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC) Update

Submission of suspect *E. coli* O157 isolates or positive STEC broths and other enteric pathogens by clinical laboratories is an essential component of foodborne outbreak investigations.

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and several local health departments are investigating an increase in the number of illnesses caused by *E. coli* O157. MDCH has received reports of 29 cases so far in the month of June. In the past 4 years, there has been an average of 10 cases for the same time frame. Although testing is ongoing, early public health laboratory results so far indicate that 9 of the illnesses are linked, suggesting a common food source. Preliminary information collected from the patients indicates ground beef to be the most likely source. In addition to the 9 MI cases so far shown to match, Ohio has 10 cases that also match and there are four additional states that may be involved.

Simultaneously, the ongoing investigation of *Salmonella* St. Paul cases linked to consumption of fresh tomatoes has, largely through the submission to public health of isolates recovered in clinical microbiology laboratories, identified 383 persons ill with this organism.

The continued cooperation of clinical laboratories in the submission of isolates to MDCH Bureau of Laboratories when STEC, *Salmonella species*, *Shigella species* and *Listeria species* are recovered is essential. Your efforts contribute greatly to the health, safety, and well being of the citizens of Michigan.

Containers for shipping isolates are available at no charge from MDCH – see the web site at: www.michigan.gov/mdchlab; click on Specimen Submission, then scroll down to CLINICAL SPECIMEN CONTAINER COMPONENT LISTING. Order Unit 42A for Category A and/or Unit 42B for Category B infectious substances. Unit 42B contains a prepaid express mail shipping label. Reminder: Category A isolates (including STEC) cannot be sent through the U.S. Mail.

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